

# COLLABORATION AND CONSERVATION

*Lessons Learned in Areas Managed  
through National Park Service Partnerships*

*A Report on a Workshop  
May 15-17, 2000  
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park  
Woodstock, Vermont*

*The workshop was convened by  
Conservation Study Institute and  
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment*

*for the National Park Service  
Park Planning and Special Studies Program*

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Dear Colleagues,

It was our pleasure, as colleagues and partners in Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, to host and participate in the workshop, "Planning and Collaboration: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed through National Park Service Partnerships," held May 15-17, 2000. We know from experience that managing through a partnership is sometimes challenging. Nevertheless, it is tremendously rewarding, bringing benefits not only to the land and resources being managed, but also to the cooperating organizations and institutions, the community and region at large, and the general public.

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is located in Woodstock, Vermont, long renowned as one of New England's most beautiful villages. The park includes the historic estate that has been successively the home of George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings, and Billings's heirs, most recently his granddaughter, Mary French, and her husband, Laurence S. Rockefeller. The Park came into existence in 1992 through the generous gift of Mary and Laurence Rockefeller, with a mission to interpret its place in American conservation history and the changing nature of land stewardship in America. The establishment of the National Park Service's Conservation Study Institute, based at the park, extends this park mission to a broader audience.

The park operates in partnership with the Billings Farm & Museum, which is privately owned and operated by the Woodstock Foundation and is situated within the park's protection zone. An operating dairy farm and historical museum of rural Vermont culture, the Billings Farm & Museum engages its visitors in interactive learning that fosters appreciation for responsible agriculture and sustainable land use. The partnership between the National Park Service and the Woodstock Foundation includes operational collaboration to present the park and the museum to the public. The foundation also holds a dedicated endowment fund for preservation and conservation of the park's historic resources.

Real partnerships, based on common goals developed and shared by public and private partners, are necessary if the National Park Service is to advance its dual mission of assuring preservation and public enjoyment of partnership areas. There is much to learn from the people who have been in the forefront of developing, planning, and managing the many innovative partnership parks and Congressionally designated conservation areas that mark the recent decades of the Service. We firmly believe that partnerships and collaboration will remain essential elements of the National Park Service and, indeed, the world of conservation in the future.

We must first understand the scope of what is possible and then work together to define a clear vision and steps that will take us there. The workshop and this report are important first steps in that process. Please get involved.

Rolf Diamant  
*Superintendent*  
*Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park*

David A. Donath  
*President*  
*The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.*





Dear Colleagues,

The Conservation Study Institute is built on partnerships. It was therefore a special pleasure for the Conservation Study Institute and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, a founding partner of the Institute, to convene this workshop on “Planning and Collaboration: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed through National Park Service Partnerships” in cooperation with the NPS Park Planning and Special Studies Program.

The workshop’s partnership theme, together with our commitment to learning from practitioners and their experience, provided an ideal opportunity for our collaboration and builds on the missions of our two organizations. The Conservation Study Institute’s mission is to create opportunities for dialogue, inquiry, and lifelong learning to enhance the stewardship of landscape and communities. QLF is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to support the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada and New England, and to create models for stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage which can be applied worldwide.

The twenty-five people who participated in the workshop brought rich experience with cross-sectoral partnerships involving the National Park Service and a diverse array of partners. Their stories of how these partnership areas have developed to protect natural and cultural heritage—and to encompass lived-in landscapes as well as wild areas—demonstrates the importance of community-based conservation for the stewardship of America’s special places. Successful experience with partnership areas will be central to our evolving National Park System in the coming century and to the conservation of landscapes in communities across the country. This approach is a trend paralleled in other countries around the world.

At this workshop, participants examined the lessons learned from real experiences in real places and suggested steps to enhance future partnerships. We are enthusiastic about the findings and recommendations of this workshop, and look forward to convening another workshop on this theme in the near future. We welcome your comments and ideas on ways to move this dialogue forward.

Nora Mitchell  
*Director*  
*Conservation Study Institute*

Jessica Brown  
*Vice President for International Programs*  
*QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment*



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# FOREWORD

In 1970 Congress declared that the units of the National Park System were a cumulative expression of our national heritage. During the past 30 years there have been several cycles of expansion of the system to encompass different types of resources and different strategies for protecting them so they will be unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Increasingly, the recent designations rely on partnerships and shared investment in planning and management.

In the past year alone, Congress has directed the National Park Service (NPS) to study more than 35 new areas for potential designation, many of them reflecting local interest in some type of relationship with the NPS that does not necessarily involve the traditional formula of federal acquisition and management. At the same time, the NPS is being asked to continue a long tradition of providing assistance to partners working in areas outside of the units of the National Park System.

As the NPS responds to demands for recognition, formal designation, and technical and financial assistance, discussions about the future of the agency often focus on three major questions:

- How will the NPS reach out to the changing and diverse population of the United States?
- How will the national parks address increasing public use pressures?
- How will the national parks be protected from threats that originate primarily beyond park boundaries?

Perhaps the “problem” of the burgeoning interest in establishing “nontraditional” areas is really the solution: that the agency must look beyond the traditional models and recognize the potential of partnerships to help the NPS fulfill its mission to protect our nation’s natural and cultural heritage. Perhaps the distinction between “internal” and “external” programs is no longer valid because protecting the parks depends upon our ability to expand a stewardship ethic throughout the nation, to protect resources at the local level, and to see the units of the National Park System as hubs in a broader network of protected areas.

Differing assumptions about the costs and benefits of “nontraditional” areas are often reflected in the challenges of studying and planning for Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Trails, Heritage Areas, and the new parks that are managed through complex partnerships. Even though there is extensive experience with partnership work, the opportunity to learn from common

experiences is often constrained by the fact that these similar issues are being addressed by different programs and offices within the NPS. There are also few opportunities to acknowledge the insights gained from the expanding use of partnerships and to examine the implications for both the agency and its partners.

It is within this context that the NPS Park Planning and Special Studies Program, the Conservation Study Institute, and the QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment convened a workshop to explore the experiences of working in partnerships that are outside the traditional NPS management model and to propose next steps for creating more effective long-term conservation partnerships.

As discussed in this report, workshop participants described factors that contribute to successful partnerships and the benefits that extend throughout the National Park System, even to the “traditional” national parks. They questioned whether there are really any “traditional” parks since even the Yellowstone and Yosemite increasingly work with and depend on partners. The workshop also highlighted a concern of many NPS staff and partners that the partnership activities and programs lack the same respect and prestige afforded traditional parks.

Looking to the future, workshop participants identified a series of challenges: to foster in the institutional culture of the NPS a deeper understanding of partnerships, to create a broader agency vision that includes the full spectrum of partnerships, and to learn from the growing experience of both the NPS and its partners about building effective long-term collaborations. Although they proposed ideas for next steps to begin to meet these challenges, they also recognized the need to bring more voices to the table to develop a comprehensive, strategic approach.

This report is part of an ongoing discussion about these issues. The Park Planning and Special Studies Program, the Conservation Study Institute, and the QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment intend to convene additional workshops. We hope that readers of this report will be able to use the findings, suggestions, and ideas to protect resources for the enjoyment of future generations on either side of a boundary that designates a park, river, trail, or heritage area.

Warren Brown  
*Program Manager*  
*Park Planning and Special Studies, NPS*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1916, the National Park Service (NPS) has served as the land manager for the country's National Park System, conserving resources unimpaired for future generations, and providing interpretation and public access. The NPS also manages a number of programs related to natural resource conservation, outdoor recreation, and historic preservation that rely primarily on partnerships with others outside the federal government. In the past two decades, these two roles have been combined in new models for planning and managing many long distance trails, wild and scenic rivers, heritage areas, and new units of the National Park System. These partnership models represent an ongoing evolution of conservation that relies increasingly on long-term collaboration between public and private organizations to protect, manage, and interpret natural and cultural resources.

People working on new models of parks and "partnership areas" and those in the agency providing assistance through partnership programs face substantial challenges working within a framework designed for "traditional" NPS units. Although there is now extensive experience with collaborative models that benefit both parks and partnerships, there have been few opportunities to examine what has been learned, share this knowledge with others, or incorporate these lessons into NPS policy and practice.

In May 2000, twenty-five people with partnership experience from the NPS and partner organizations participated in a workshop, "Planning and Collaboration: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed through National Park Service Partnerships." This workshop was convened by the Conservation Study Institute and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment for the NPS Park Planning and Special Studies Program.

Based on their collective experience in a variety of places across the country, workshop participants examined the process and evolution of effective partnerships, and identified operating principles for successful long-term collaboration. Participants described the benefits of working in collaboration—benefits that strengthen the entire National Park System. They also discussed the disparity they perceive in agency recognition of partnership areas and programs compared to areas that are designated as units of the National Park System. There was a sense that this disparity results in missed opportunities to enhance the stewardship of national parks and other places that are part of the nation's heritage.

The vision that emerged from discussions was of a future in which units of the National Park System and the partnership areas outside the System are all part of

a nationwide network of parks and conservation areas that are relevant to a diverse population. In this future, nonprofit organizations, institutions, businesses, and public sector agencies all are important players. NPS involvement in this network of collaboration is central, founded in the agency's traditional strengths but extending beyond this tradition to include its extensive experience in partnerships. Agency programs that support conservation efforts outside of the National Park System are recognized as a valuable and integral part of the agency's mission. The sense of competition that many participants feel today between parks and partnership areas is replaced with an appreciation for the contributions of each to conservation and the desire to learn from each other's experiences. Workshop participants recognized the potential of the NPS to be a leader in working collaboratively, and they embraced the idea that it was time to articulate and demonstrate a broader role for the NPS in working with others on stewardship of the American landscape.

The group made a number of recommendations for next steps that include the following:

- Create additional opportunities to learn from our partnership experience, involving both NPS staff and partner representatives.
- Develop means for recognizing the successes and contributions of partnership areas and programs, and for rewarding the individuals who make them work.
- Provide new tools and more flexibility in NPS planning.
- Revise management approaches to staff transition in partnership areas to retain institutional memory and ensure continuity of partner relationships.
- Develop clearer direction on the appropriate application of NPS management policies and other federal guidelines and requirements in partnership areas.

This report, which is based on the workshop discussions and written comments from workshop participants, is intended to contribute to a continuing dialogue—both within the NPS and between the NPS and its many partners—on the increasingly vital role of partnerships in conserving the heritage of America's most important landscapes.



1. *The Eastern Shore tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay contain many of the region's natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network seeks to link the places people value to an understanding of the Bay as a system, thereby enhancing public commitment to restoration and conservation. The NPS coordinates the Network with state and local governments, the private sector, and other federal agencies. Photo of Onancock Creek by Len Kaufman, courtesy of Virginia Tourism Corporation.*
2. *Within the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, the NPS, Massachusetts and Rhode Island state governments, municipalities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions work in partnership to protect the Valley's special identity as the place where America's Industrial Revolution began. One example is the 180-acre Daniels farm, protected for its extensive historical documentation on land use and rural life within the Valley. Photo courtesy of Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.*
3. *The North Country National Scenic Trail in North Dakota as it crosses tallgrass prairie in the Sheyenne National Grasslands. The NPS administers the trail in cooperation with other federal, state, and local agencies, private organizations, and individuals. The trail links the seven northern tier states from New York to North Dakota, where it connects with the Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail. NPS photo.*
4. *Participants in a 1997 Underground Railroad Bi-National Charette, which explored interpretive linkages of the Underground Railroad story in the U.S. and Canada. Delegates from the NPS, Parks Canada, and partners spent eight days visiting Underground Railroad sites in Ohio, Michigan, and southern Ontario, Canada. Photo by Barbara Tagger.*
5. *Youth taking part in summer art programming offered by ArtWorks! at Dover Street, a partner of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The participating youth visited the park to explore their city's whaling history, using art as a medium. Photo by John Robson, courtesy of ArtWorks! at Dover Street.*
6. *A backpacker along the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. The 2,600 mile trail follows the Sierra and Cascade peaks of California, Oregon, and Washington between the Mexican and Canadian borders. Courtesy of the NPS.*



# I. Workshop Design & Objectives



The workshop, "Planning and Collaboration: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed through National Park Service Partnerships," held on May 15-17, 2000, was designed to provide participants with a chance to reflect on their work, discuss challenges and new directions with colleagues, and consider the opportunities presented by partnership areas. The twenty-five participants, drawn from the National Park Service (NPS) and partner organizations, brought to the dialogue extensive and diverse experience in collaborative work. The workshop goals were to:

1. Learn from the experience and expertise of participants in order to more effectively plan and manage partnership areas;
2. Develop a strategic vision for the NPS and its partners that will help these areas to flourish; and
3. Identify the next steps needed to implement this vision.

Prior to the meeting participants responded to a set of questions designed to begin capturing their ideas, and the responses helped to frame the workshop agenda and discussions. These questions related to the key issues and challenges that the NPS and its partners face in partnership work, critical factors for successful planning and management, the contributions of partnership areas to the National Park System, and the ideal role for the NPS in the planning and management of these areas. The responses to the pre-meeting questions have contributed substantially to this report.

1. The Chesapeake Bay community of Ewell on Smith Island. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is a partnership system of parks, refuges, museums, historic communities, and water trails—each telling part of the Bay story. Together, these Gateways provide a way for understanding the Bay as a whole. The NPS provides technical and financial assistance to locally initiated projects that help convey the Bay's diverse stories. Photo courtesy of Maryland Office of Tourism Development.



2. The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor has put significant effort into signage, which has helped heighten awareness of the sites and the region's history. Photo courtesy of Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor.



3. The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, a nonprofit excursion railroad that operates in partnership with the NPS in Ohio's Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Established in 1975, the park preserves rural landscapes along the Cuyahoga River between Cleveland and Akron. Photo by Sandra Gillard.

4. Walking the Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail. Established in 1983, the 700-mile trail generally follows the track used by American Indians and early settlers as the shortest route between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers. NPS photo.

5. Hauling logs from horse-drawn skid to portable sawmill as part of an educational demonstration on sustainable forest practices for woodland owners in Vermont. The 1995 demonstration was a collaborative project of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Billings Farm & Museum, U.S. Forest Service, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and Vermont Woodland Resources Association. Photo by Nora Mitchell.



6. A 1993 photo of the John Parker home in Ripley, Ohio, on the Ohio River. John Parker (1827-1900) was born into slavery in Virginia. After an escape attempt, Parker was sold to another owner in Alabama, where he eventually purchased his freedom in 1845. Four years later he moved his family to Ohio, where he assisted hundreds of runaways to freedom in the Ohio Underground Railroad. Photo by Barbara Tagger.



7. The John Parker Home in 1999, following designation as a National Historic Landmark and restoration through the efforts of the Ripley-based John Parker Historical Society. The Parker Home will serve as a museum and interpretive center on the Underground Railroad. Photo by Barbara Tagger.



8. Students learn about water quality while conducting sampling of White Clay Creek in Delaware. White Clay Creek, designated a National Wild and Scenic River in 2000, is managed in partnership with state, county, and local governments and private organizations. Photo courtesy of Delaware Nature Society.





## II. Setting the Context for the Workshop

Over the past 20 years, Congress has established an increasing number of conservation areas that depend upon long-term collaboration between partner organizations and the National Park Service (NPS). Areas managed through innovative partnerships include certain national parks, national long distance trails, wild and scenic rivers, and, more recently, national heritage areas. These areas, which create opportunities for shared investment and management among public and private organizations, represent new approaches that draw on traditions within the NPS, yet extend the agency beyond its traditions.

As Congress, responding to increased public interest, has created more partnership areas, it has raised new challenges for the NPS and its partners, such as:

- How can the NPS more successfully forge long-term partnerships with local organizations and communities to plan and manage these areas?
- How can the agency and its partners build professional capacity to deal with management decisions posed by these areas?
- How can the NPS expand beyond its traditional approach of direct management control to incorporate approaches that encourage collaborative, community-based conservation?

With a wide diversity in the specific arrangements for cooperative planning and management, there is no one “partnership model.” The arrangements vary with the place and its natural and cultural resources and recreational opportunities, as well as the array of organizations and institutions involved and the nature of land ownership. In each case, however, the partnership structure encourages diverse organizations to work together, and building lasting relationships among the partners is fundamental to the conservation effort.



### *Two Examples of Recently Designated Partnership Parks*

≈ New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (Massachusetts) was established in 1996 to commemorate whaling as part of American history. The park encompasses 34 acres and 70 buildings, about one-third of New Bedford's downtown. Federal property ownership within the park is limited, and the NPS relies on partnerships with state and municipal agencies, as well as nonprofit institutions, to carry out its mission. The park also has a distant partner. To recognize the contributions of Alaska Natives in

the history of whaling, the park is legislatively linked to the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska, making New Bedford National Historical Park the first bicoastal unit of the National Park System.



Courtesy New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

≈ The New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park (Louisiana), established in 1994, is dedicated to the preservation and celebration of jazz, our nation's best-known indigenous art form. The park is structured around a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the City of

New Orleans; other partners include the New Orleans Jazz Commission and the city's many neighborhood jazz clubs. The "park" encompasses a living cultural tradition that is woven into the fabric of New Orleans, and the story of jazz will be conveyed at various locations throughout the city, allowing visitors to experience the sights, sounds, and places where jazz evolved. The role of the NPS is to educate and interpret the evolution of jazz, and to cooperate in perpetuating an art form rather than managing land or buildings. A visitor facility with performance venues and an education center will be located in buildings leased in the city's Armstrong Park.



Gene Hyden

## A. Historical Perspective

Although partnerships have been used to successfully conserve important resource areas for a number of years, the evolution of a partnership model gained momentum with the establishment of Lowell National Historical Park in 1978. In a presentation on the first day of the workshop, Rolf Diamant, Superintendent of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, noted that following on the success of the Lowell partnerships, support grew in Congress to pursue parks based on collaborations with other public and private parties. Congressional interest was also heightened with the increasing desire of communities across the country to draw upon the services and resources of the NPS. As a result, in the 1980s and 1990s, many new units of the National Park System were established with a variety of nontraditional formulas (see box at left for two examples of partnership parks). Diamant also noted that Lowell National Historical Park, "... with its successful formula of mixing public/private investments in downtown heritage preservation with NPS expertise in visitor services and interpretive facilities, in turn inspired the first generation of national heritage areas." In heritage areas, federal, state, and local governments and private interests join together to provide for preservation, interpretation, recreation, and other activities. Each national heritage area tells the stories of its residents, past and present, celebrating cultural and natural heritage and preserving special landscapes. The NPS is often a catalyst among the partners, providing technical assistance as well as financial assistance for a limited number of years following designation.

This history of the last two decades depicts an evolving conservation model that includes new roles for the NPS and a wide array of partners. (For an overview of the many different designations for which the NPS now has responsibility, see page 5.) As the partnership models continue to evolve, the concept of a nationwide system of parks and conservation areas is becoming more clear. This concept provides an inclusive national framework for conservation that encompasses wilderness areas as well as places close to where people live and work. The distinction between "a national system of parks" and the National Park System was first noted by Stephen T. Mather, the founding director of the National Park System, according to Paul Pritchard in a recent *George Wright Forum* article on state parks. Pritchard also uses the term "national system of parks and conservation areas." (See Further Reading.)

# Current Definitions from the Index of the National Park Service

**T**he *National Parks: Index 1999-2001*, the “Official Index of the National Park Service,” lists the Congressionally designated properties for which the NPS has responsibilities. The Index describes the National Park System and the various designations it encompasses. Besides the National Park System, **four other categories** of nationally important areas exist: National Heritage Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Trails, and Affiliated Areas. These areas, almost all Congressionally designated, are closely linked in importance and purpose to the national park areas managed by the NPS. Although most are not currently defined as units of the National Park System, these related areas conserve important segments of the nation’s heritage. Many are managed through partners working in cooperation with the NPS.

☞ The **National Park System** has been defined as comprising those areas owned and managed by the NPS. The designations for units include: National Parks, National Monuments, National Lakeshores, National Seashores, National Rivers and Wild and Scenic Riverways,\* National Scenic Trails,\* National Historic Sites, National Historical Parks, National Recreation Areas, National Preserves, National Reserves, National Memorials, National Parkways, and four designations for areas associated with United States military history.

☞ **National Heritage Areas** include entire communities or regions in which residents, businesses, and local governments have come together to conserve special landscapes and their own heritage. Conservation, interpretation, and other activities are managed by a designated local management entity through partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and private nonprofit organizations.

The NPS does not acquire new land in these areas, but provides technical and financial assistance for a limited period.

☞ Rivers within the **National Wild and Scenic Rivers System** are classified as wild, scenic, or recreational according to the degree of development, and may include only a segment of a river. The system includes rivers designated by Congress and also by the Secretary of Interior (provided they have been protected first at the state level). While some designated rivers are managed directly by the NPS, thus are units of the National Park System, a growing number are administered through partnership arrangements between the NPS and other entities.

☞ The **National Trails System** includes national scenic trails, national historic trails, national recreation trails, and side and connecting trails. Since the National Trails System Act of 1968, 22 national scenic trails and national historic trails (collectively referred to as long distance trails) have been designated. The NPS administers 17 of them, one jointly with the Bureau of Land Management. The federal government has also recognized 800 national recreation trails totaling 9,000 miles in length. Of these, 525 are on federal lands, 151 are state trails, 85 are local, 31 are on private lands, and 12 are managed by two or more entities.

☞ **Affiliated Areas** include a variety of significant properties with high historic or scientific value. These areas, Congressionally designated, are eligible for NPS technical and financial assistance but are neither federally owned nor administered by the NPS.

*\*Note, however, that not all designated rivers or trails are units of the National Park System*

## National Park Service



**National Park System**

PHOTO © BRENT M. ERB



**National Heritage Areas**



**National Wild & Scenic Rivers**



**National Trails System**



**Affiliated Areas**



## A Working Vocabulary for NPS Partnerships

For the NPS and its partners, the term “partnership” has several definitions:

- ☞ Within national parks, **partnerships** are increasingly important in carrying out basic missions and mandates. Many national park managers have initiated collaboration with neighboring communities and local organizations to create better communication and to work on issues of mutual interest, such as visitor traffic and adjacent land development. Participants in two 1996 seminars on national parks and gateway communities, organized by the Sonoran Institute for the NPS Park Planning and Special Studies Program, commented that all national parks are partnership areas and that “park managers should view partnerships as an important management tool in protecting park resources.” (See report, *National Parks and their Neighbors*, in Further Reading.) Overall, partners in the national parks include neighboring communities, volunteers, friends groups, cooperating associations, concession operators, as well as corporations, foundations, and others who help support park operations.
- ☞ The legislation for certain national parks specifies one or more partners to work with the NPS in planning and managing the designated area. These can be called “**partnership parks**.” Partners may include state and other federal agencies, local governments, and local business or nonprofit organizations.
- ☞ Certain Congressionally authorized areas, such as national heritage areas and some wild and scenic rivers and long distance trails, are managed by other entities through partnerships with the NPS. In these cases, which can be termed “**partnership areas**,” the NPS provides technical and financial assistance to the local managing organization(s).
- ☞ The term “**partnership programs**” refers to programs that the NPS administers outside of its role as a land manager. These programs operate from the NPS regional offices and provide technical and financial assistance to states, local governments, and the private sector for such activities as historic preservation, river and trail conservation, urban parks, and recreation.





## B. National and International Context

The rise in designations of NPS partnership areas reflects broader concurrent shifts taking place in conservation. In the United States, the last 15 years have seen a dramatic increase in community-based conservation, evidenced by the growth of local organizations such as land trusts, watershed groups, and historic preservation initiatives. In remarks at the workshop based on a recent research project on stewardship, Jacquelyn Tuxill, workshop coordinator for QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, noted that locally based conservation often builds on a strong sense of place and a concern for landscape integrity that includes both cultural and natural heritage. Many community-based initiatives pursue collaboration among diverse interests, weaving together economic, social, ecological, and cultural objectives. (See *The Landscape of Conservation Stewardship* in Further Reading.)

At the workshop, Jessica Brown, Vice President for International Programs for QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, noted that these trends in parks and protected area management and community-based conservation in the U.S. are paralleled globally. Worldwide, there is growing recognition that protected areas can no longer be treated as islands but must be seen in the context of overall land use, and that successful managers are adopting more inclusive, collaborative approaches in working closely with local communities. Over the last two decades, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have grown dramatically and now play a major role in conservation. As conservation strategies become increasingly bioregional in scope, yet must also demonstrate benefits at the local level, there is a trend in many countries toward partnerships among public agencies, NGOs, and diverse stakeholders. (See *Landscape Stewardship: New Directions in Conservation of Nature and Culture*, special issue of *George Wright Forum*, Vol. 17, No. 1, in Further Reading.)

## C. Defining Partnership Parks and Areas: The challenge of terminology

As Congressional designations of nationally significant areas have diversified and brought partners into planning and managing, these new designations no longer fit neatly into the traditional National Park System definitions. Consequently, these new areas have been placed into other categories, called “related areas,” which seem to imply lesser value and a lack of connectedness to the more traditional national parks under the purview of the NPS. Agency nomenclature can be confusing, for those inside as well as outside the NPS (e.g., the Appalachian Trail, a national scenic trail and part of the National Trails System, is also a unit of the National Park System). This report uses as its working vocabulary the terms “partnership parks” and “partnership areas.” As defined on page 6, these two terms indicate places where the NPS is working in a long-term relationship with other organizations for conservation of Congressionally designated areas.

In addition, the growth of collaboration and the diversity of the conservation model have resulted in widespread use of such terms as “partnership,” “empower,” or “work inclusively.” The workshop participants struggled to find terminology that captures the insights they have gained about partnerships that are intended to last in perpetuity. They acknowledged the need for words that go beyond the commonly used rhetoric that can convey the necessary skills, the commitment, and the rewards of working in long-term partnerships for conservation. They did consider and reject certain terms—for example, using “non-traditional” to describe the more recent national parks and other designated areas involving partnerships—agreeing instead to continue the search while, through this report, putting this challenge before a broader audience.

*Through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, the nonprofit Appalachian Trail Conference monitors and maintains the Appalachian National Scenic Trail through its network of member organizations. Volunteer hours in 2000 totaled 201,466 hours, contributed by 4,629 volunteers. Valued at \$14 per hour, this represents \$2.8 million in donated services. Photo by John Wright, Appalachian Trail Conference.*

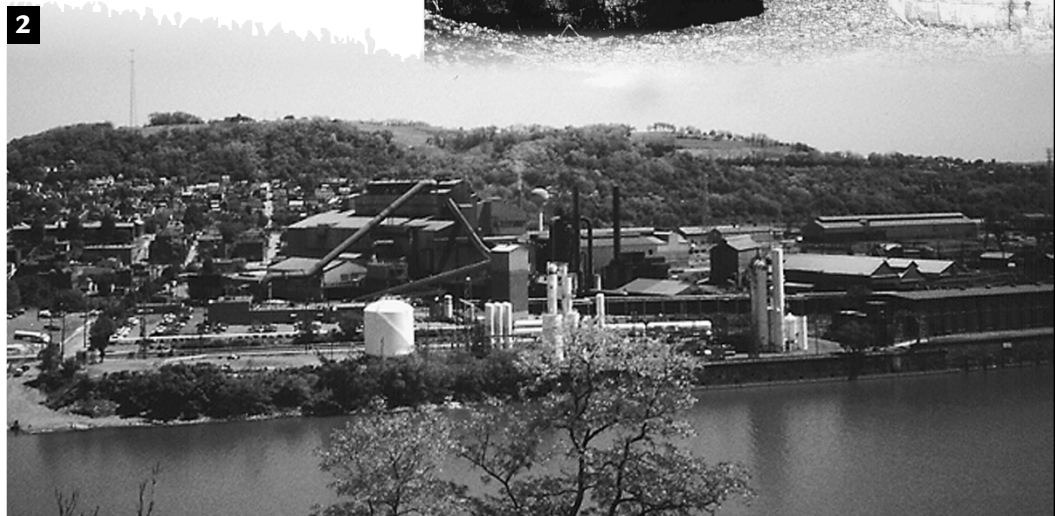
1. Historic canal remnants are visible in many places along the North Country National Scenic Trail in Ohio, such as Lusk Lock in Beaver Creek State Park. The trail makes a U-shaped sweep through Ohio, following the Buckeye Trail for much of the way. NPS photo.
2. One of many steel mills in the Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) region, once the “Steel Making Capital of the World.” A commanding force for over a century, the Pittsburgh steel industry made possible railroads, skyscrapers, and shipbuilding while altering corporate practice and labor organization. Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area helps to preserve the region’s cultural heritage and develop educational programming. Public hiking trails and riverboat tours link remnants of the old mills and communities founded by mill workers. Rivers of Steel is managed by a nonprofit organization, working in partnership with local communities, business and union interests, and local, state, and federal agencies. Photo by Judy Hart.
3. The North Country National Scenic Trail in the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan. The trail, which began as U.S. Forest Service proposal in the 1960s, takes hikers through publicly owned lands, including national forests, state parks and forests, and near or through small villages and towns. The

diverse landscapes and scenic and historic features offer hikers a chance to understand how the land was formed, and how it has been used and altered by humans. Photo by Bill Menke.

4. A classic Chesapeake Bay screw-pile lighthouse, now part of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The Museum is a “Gateway hub”—a primary visitor orientation point for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. The NPS assists local efforts to enhance Gateway sites that tell a piece of the overall Bay story and to link them with a network of walking, biking, and water trails. Photo courtesy of Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.
5. Along the Maurice National Wild and Scenic River in New Jersey. The river was designated in 1993 to protect critical habitat on the Atlantic Flyway. NPS photo.
6. Chimney Rock National Historic Site in western Nebraska, one of the first landmarks along the Oregon Trail. An NPS affiliated area, the site is owned by the State of Nebraska, and administered by the City of Bayard, the Nebraska Historical Society, and the NPS under a cooper-

ative agreement. NPS Historic Photo Collection, photo by George A. Grant.

7. Inupiat dancer from Barrow, Alaska, performing at the New Bedford Whaling Museum in July 2000. The museum and the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow are two of the partners that help the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park carry out its mission to commemorate whaling as part of American history. Photo by John Robson, courtesy of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park.



### III. Summary of Workshop Discussions: What have we learned about working in partnership areas?

*"I think that partnerships or the partnership model is the key conservation tool [the NPS] will be using in the future."*

Joe DiBello, Stewardship and Partnerships  
Team Manager, Philadelphia Support Office

*"Partnering makes  
sense for a better future  
for ALL parks."*

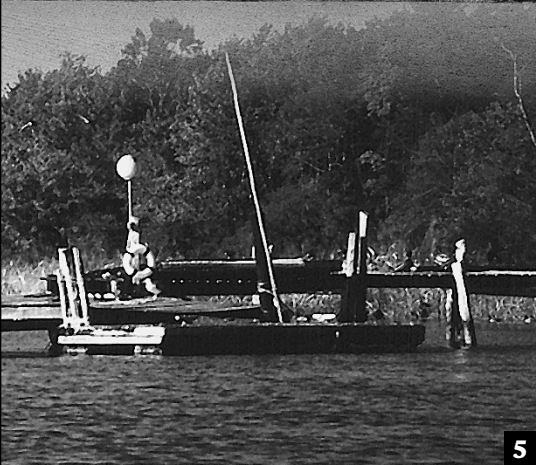
Kathy Abbott,  
Executive Director,  
Island Alliance  
and NPS partner



7



6



5

*"I am convinced that the new frontier for the NPS in the twenty-first century will be partnership parks—they simply aren't making more of the traditional variety. The newer 'partnership' initiatives ... are an indication of what is to come. If the NPS is to do more than be a 'custodian' of a static system in the future, it needs to get on board the partnership concept with enthusiasm and resources."*

John Debo, Superintendent,  
Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Partnerships are complex and dynamic, a dance of relationships between the tensions of mutual interest and self interest. They can form in different ways and for many reasons, ranging from a "kitchen table" brainstorming of common interests, to responding to the availability of funding or the promise of joint economic benefits. In any setting it takes time and hard work to forge effective relationships that continue to be productive for all parties. Working within a federal agency is especially challenging because decision-making can be slow and can hinder the collaborative process, and guidelines often appear voluminous and unclear to nongovernmental partners. Given the increasing commitment of the National Park Service (NPS) to long-term conservation partnerships, it is imperative to glean lessons from experience about what does and doesn't work, to share this knowledge across the agency and with partners, and to build it into agency policy and procedures.

Workshop participants reflected on their experiences and contributed many thoughts on the factors critical to forging successful long-term partnerships. They also discussed the benefits throughout the agency of working collaboratively and the challenges of creating more effective NPS partnerships.

## A. Principles for Forging Long-Term, Sustainable Partnerships

*“The critical factors for success are rooted in the nature of the relationships between the NPS and its partners.”*

David Donath,  
President, The Woodstock  
Foundation, Inc.,  
and NPS partner

*“Everyone has to be an equal player, or at least agree on what is a fair and reasonable ‘balance of power.’ A big part of what makes the [Appalachian Trail] volunteer-based ‘cooperative management system’ successful is that it builds on ... volunteer stewardship. It means ... sharing ownership.”*

Pamela Underhill, Park Manager,  
Appalachian National Scenic Trail

*“Use an open process which empowers a variety of interests to participate.”*

Charles Barscz, Wild  
and Scenic Rivers  
Program Leader,  
Philadelphia Support  
Office

The experience of workshop participants was quite varied, yet they had many common insights into what contributes to successful, long-term cooperation. The following principles that they described work in concert to create and sustain effective partnerships.

### 🌀 **Listen and be responsive to the needs of others.**

Listening well contributes to good relationships and enables the NPS to better serve the partners and communities of people who have not traditionally been involved in national parks. “A critical factor for me was learning to listen to the partners I work closely with,” says Barbara Tagger, Southeast Regional Coordinator of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program. “We must understand that the projects we [in the NPS] work on are just that—projects. But for the people we work with, these planning efforts are their livelihoods, heritage, and, more importantly, their story.” Tagger gives great attention to the needs of partners and believes that providing technical assistance to meet local needs is crucial to making a partnership work. “If management is to be effective and community-relevant in the long run, it must address the needs and aspirations both of the NPS and of local stakeholders,” offers partner David Donath, President of the Woodstock Foundation.

🌀 **Build relationships and sustain trust.** “Strong relationships and trust are essential,” says Phil Huffman, who has experience with NPS partnerships from within and outside of the agency. Tom Gilbert, Superintendent of Ice Age and North Country National Scenic Trails, stresses “clear, open communication and integrity” as critical to success. Being accessible to partners, sharing costs and commitments, being truthful, and listening to and respecting

each partner’s perspectives, motivations, and values all contribute to a sound foundation of trust that can carry a relationship successfully through the ups and downs of long-term joint work.

🌀 **Work openly and inclusively in ways that build a partnership team.** “Planning and collaboration must be inclusive,” says partner Augie Carlino, Executive Director of Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. “In national heritage areas, any decision made by partners will affect a ‘community’—[whether] cultural, geographical, or occupational—therefore decisions must be made with their involvement and with consideration of the effect on the community.” Pamela Underhill, Park Manager, Appalachian National Scenic Trail, believes that “achieving ‘buy-in’ by all essential stakeholders and partners is critical to successful planning and management,” and recommends bringing any critics or naysayers to the table. A concerted, ongoing effort to involve all major stakeholders and the grassroots pays off, even though it can be “messy” and time-consuming. “Give things the time they take,” says Judy Hart, then National Heritage Areas Program Leader.

Involving people and groups with a stake in the partnership area invests local residents in long-term management, which helps to sustain the collaboration over time. “If [Appalachian Trail] volunteers didn’t feel that they truly have a ‘say’ in decisions ... I don’t think they’d still be here,” says Underhill. Deirdre Gibson, Program Manager, Park Planning and Special Resource Studies in the Philadelphia Support Office, sees an inclusive public involvement process as a strategic opportunity to build the capacity of local organizations “because they will be there for the long run.” Working inclusively from the earliest opportunities can build the support so important

*“Use the planning process to develop and strengthen local partnerships. ... Ensure that local support is developed because that’s where the implementers are.”*

Deirdre Gibson, Program Manager,  
Park Planning and Special Resource  
Studies, Philadelphia Support Office

*“Genuine community involvement at all levels is a critical factor for success.”*

Barbara L. Pollarine,  
Management Assistant,  
Northeast Region,  
Philadelphia

*“The NPS must strongly consider working with ethnic groups and communities that have not been traditionally involved in partnerships.”*

Barbara Tagger, Southeast Regional  
Coordinator, National Underground  
Railroad Network to Freedom Program

in later phases. As an example, Huffman suggests engaging a broader cross-section of stakeholders in the initial resource evaluation for potential national heritage areas and other partnership areas. “The special resource study needs to be more than just an academic evaluation done from a distance,” he says.

People whose participation is critical include “leaders at local, state, and national levels who are genuinely interested in the long-term values of the area,” according to Sarah Peskin, Planning and Legislation Group Manager in the Boston Support Office. John Haubert, Outdoor Recreation Planner in Park Planning and Special Studies, believes in having a “dedicated local constituency that is able to influence the ‘movers and shakers’ in the community.” Tagger brings partners into planning because “in most instances they have a greater vision and understanding of the project.” She also urges that as the NPS restructures interpretive programs to be more inclusive of the contributions of all Americans to the nation’s history, the agency also reach out to these groups through NPS partnership programs and planning efforts.

☞ **Be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.** It is important to be “flexible enough to deal with each area or organization on the basis of its own capacity,” says Gibson. “Responsiveness and flexibility on the part of NPS project staff and management are essential,” offers Huffman, “including an ability and willingness to tailor the study/planning process around the most important issues rather than following a regimented cookbook approach.” Underhill believes partnership work takes people “who are willing to cut through the red tape, think outside the box, and look for creative solutions.” Carlino points out that with natural and cultural

resources subject to many different threats and conditions, “the NPS and its partners must be able to respond quickly to imminent changes to the resources.” Jonathan Doherty, Manager of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, suggests that partners should jointly develop “a strategy for dealing with major conservation issues for the area.”

Changing circumstances can also offer new opportunities. Tagger points to one such opportunity within the changing demographics of our country. “The NPS must become more involved in ‘non-traditional’ communities. These communities place little or no demands on the NPS for its services,” which makes it easy for the agency to ignore these potential partners or provide them only limited services.

☞ **Be willing to share control, and work together in ways that empower the partners.** “A partnership is not a ‘team’ where there is a hierarchical system,” observes Carlino. “In a partnership there are at least two, if not more, partners with decision-making capacity.” Donath describes an enduring partnership as one which is “business-like and mutual, entailing shared investments, decision-making, and benefits,” and suggests that the NPS approach these collaborations with the sense of give and take and mutuality of interests that characterize private sector partnerships. For an agency such as the NPS, to achieve this degree of mutuality involves, in the words of several participants, “letting go of the ‘large and in charge’ approach, ... respecting and encouraging bottom-up visioning,” “letting go of being right,” “trying the unusual, even letting the nonprofit partner ‘drive the car’”—in other words, a willingness to share or, in certain circumstances, give up control.



## *Partnerships develop and work along various gradients*

**FORMED IN THE OPPORTUNITY OF A CRISIS**

**FORMED IN THE ABSTRACT, IN QUIET TIMES**

**SHORT-TERM**

**LONG-TERM**

**PROJECT FOCUSED**

**PROGRAM FOCUSED**

**SELF-DIRECTED**

**FORCED OR DIRECTED FROM THE OUTSIDE**

**MUTUAL INTEREST**

**SELF-INTEREST**

**EQUAL**

**SUBORDINATE/DOMINANT**

**BOTTOM UP**

**TOP DOWN**

☞ **Have a realistic understanding of each partner's mission and perspective, and seek to resolve issues in ways satisfactory to all parties.** Understanding and respecting each other's contexts adds clarity to a partnership. It can help each partner to "understand what's in it for the other and the extent to which missions are congruent," offers Gibson. "While we may be partners, we also each have individual missions and authorities we adhere to," says Gilbert. Steve Elkinton, Program Leader for National Trails System Programming, describes this as "respect for the motivation factors that keep each other going"; Hart as "the ability to walk in another's shoes, think in another's head"; and Barbara Pollarine, then Management Assistant, Northeast Region, as "appreciation for another's point of view, agenda, values." Still, issues and problems will inevitably rise in a long-term collaboration. It's important to "locate and articulate the important issues," says Hart. Solid relationships, trust, and understanding each other's contexts make it easier to find solutions that work for all partners.

☞ **Build a common understanding and vision.** Common understanding among partners requires that key elements be clear to all concerned, including expectations for the partnership, roles and responsibilities of all partners, and goals for the project, which should be mutually agreed-upon. Working inclusively is key to building common understanding and vision, although it can be a challenge, as Huffman observes, to "get a diverse array of stakeholders ... to coalesce around a shared vision." He notes the importance of public involvement, in all stages, to this process. In designating new partnership areas, Huffman urges that the NPS "conduct management planning before designation ... so every-

one knows up front exactly what designation will and won't mean, and then build those provisions into the designating legislation." This approach has been used successfully for several recently designated wild and scenic rivers that are managed cooperatively. Carlino suggests that holding informal meetings brings better involvement from the community than more formal public meetings. Ongoing, open communication contributes to common understanding also. Gilbert offers that "individual communications to all landowners within the study area or designated area has proven to be a critical factor in trail planning."

☞ **Tell the stories of people and place, providing accurate, well-focused information.** Having "a cohesive focus and effective story lines and messages" contributes to effectiveness, says Doherty. At the local level telling the story builds pride, understanding, and support and contributes to sustaining the cooperative work. Tagger sees telling stories as a way to reach out to "ethnic groups and communities that have not traditionally been considered for partnerships," although she cautions about the need to work closely with these communities to honor their heritage and their story. Partnership areas often commemorate "overlooked areas of American history," according to Gibson, so storytelling can contribute a broader awareness of the nation's cultural heritage.

☞ **Maintain continuity and transfer knowledge.** Continuity is important, from both a staffing standpoint and a knowledge of the partnership. "Staff continuity is critical in establishing and maintaining relationships and trust," observes Huffman. Charles Barscz, Wild & Scenic Rivers Program Leader, Philadelphia Support Office, agrees, saying that you

“cannot have different planners coming in and out of the process.” Yet, Peskin describes situations where “the planning team develops great knowledge and experience of a given park or partnership area and then moves on to other projects, never to be consulted again.” If partnerships are viewed as a long-term arrangement rather than a short-term project, it becomes a priority to maintain the trust that has been created through the personal working relationships. Investing in thoughtful transitions between personnel can be critical to sustaining partnerships through inevitable staffing changes.

🌀 **Develop ways to continually share experience and understanding.** Workshop participants stressed the importance of capitalizing on the accumulating knowledge and understanding of collaborative work, but also acknowledged that this isn’t currently happening within the agency. Elkinton says that “every trail planning team starts from scratch,” while Joe DiBello, Stewardship and Partnerships Team Manager, Philadelphia Support Office, concedes that

“we are not effective at integrating or harnessing the experience we do have.” Several participants offered ideas for dealing with this situation. Gibson says the “RTCA [Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program] already is adept with the skills needed for partnership planning—loosen it up and fund it to encompass more than just rivers and trails.” Haubert suggests “an annual gathering of partnership planners and managers to discuss what occurred the previous year and what was acceptable and workable.”

🌀 **Celebrate successes.** Recognizing successes and the people involved rewards the hard work of building partnerships and helps to sustain the relationships. “Support for project staff from other levels in the NPS ...[including] providing moral support” is critical to effective partnership work, says Huffman. Telling the stories of successful partnerships also provides greater visibility for this work, increases understanding of the benefits, and helps to share ideas and techniques.

## *The Evolution of a Sustainable Partnership*

Workshop participants suggested the following evolution in an effective long-term partnership:

- CLARIFY ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS
- MOVE TOWARD CLARITY AND RESPECT
- ACCOMPLISH ONE PROJECT TOGETHER
- EXPLORE COMMONALITIES
- DEVELOP SHARED VOCABULARY
- ESTABLISH REGULAR COMMUNICATION
- CHECK ENVIRONMENT FOR OPPORTUNITIES
- BEGIN LOOKING OUT FOR EACH OTHER
- BUILD MUTUAL TRUST
- CHECK IN PERIODICALLY ON PARTNERSHIP
- CAPITALIZE ON DIFFERENCES
- CELEBRATE SUCCESSSES
- DISCUSS VALUES
- BUILD SHARED VISION
- ACCEPT AND CHERISH DIVERSITY OF VALUES



*Participants in the 1997 Underground Railroad Bi-National Charette, here being hosted by the National African American Museum in Detroit, Michigan. The 35 delegates discussed ways the U.S. and Canada can link interpretations of the Underground Railroad story. Photo by Barbara Tagger.*



## B. Observations on the Benefits of Working in Partnership Areas

*“The main contribution of these areas to the National Park System is to broaden the scope of the agency’s interpretation and conservation agenda. We are not just about what goes on in our federally owned parks, or if we are, we are destined to have only a limited role in conserving the great places of the Nation.”*

Jonathan Doherty, Manager, Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network

The workshop participants described many benefits that flow from the experience of working in partnership areas—benefits that strengthen the entire National Park System as well as partner organizations and the public at large.

### **Partnership areas help the NPS to reach new constituencies and build relationships that enhance public support for conservation.**

*Partnership areas “improve chances for the National Park System to remain relevant and viable to the American public, in genuine preservation of resources, in using parks as educational/learning locations.”*

Barbara L. Pollarine, Management Assistant,  
Northeast Region, Philadelphia

*“The Underground Railroad has no precedent within the National Park System. ... We’re looking at ... communities who have been excluded in the past because their [stories] don’t fit the criteria. This is forcing us to think about how to deal with different cultures. We’re also dealing with sites that are non-tangible and may not exist any longer, but the story is still there.”*

Barbara Tagger, Southeast Regional Coordinator, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program,  
Atlanta

Partnership areas can reach people who wouldn’t otherwise be reached, thus building new constituencies and support. Because these areas are often found in or near communities—in people’s “backyards”—they can make the idea of the National Park System more tangible to a broader cross-section of the general public. Working cooperatively builds long-term relationships among the NPS and conservation and preservation interests as well as officials and legislators at the local, state, and federal levels. These connections can also

lead to national and regional collaboration that serves to protect natural and cultural resources and helps to expand understanding of the NPS and partner organizations.

### **Partnership areas help to broaden the impact of the NPS.**

*“Some people view heritage areas as an innovative way of realizing the broader mandate of the agency to provide national leadership in conservation and historic preservation.”*

Rolf Diamant, Superintendent, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller  
National Historical Park

*“Partnership areas are critical in meeting the need for additional open space and in commemorating overlooked areas of American history in a timely manner.”*

Deirdre Gibson, Program Manager, Park Planning and  
Special Resource Studies, Philadelphia Support Office

The mission of the NPS (see box) is written broadly to focus on the National Park System and, through cooperation with partners, to enhance conservation. Partnership areas offer a wide range of opportunities for the NPS to provide national leadership in conservation. As Jonathan Doherty noted, the NPS through its various collaborative arrangements has an opportunity “to embrace and extend the conservation and interpretation role of the agency and deal with the evolving sense of what constitutes an important place today.” Areas managed through partnerships enhance recreational opportunities and the protection and interpretation of nationally significant resources, both cultural and natural, often in instances where it wouldn’t otherwise happen. These areas are able to leverage other funding and private sector contributions, thus extending the investment of federal dollars.

*“We need to come to grips with the notion that there are lots of places where we can play an important role that do not meet the test of ‘sacred ground.’”*

John Debo, Superintendent,  
Cuyahoga Valley National Park

*“Partnership areas carry the message that our nationally treasured scenic, cultural, and recreational resources can be lived-in landscapes.”*

Tom Gilbert, Superintendent, Ice Age and  
North Country National Scenic Trails

### Partnership areas offer valuable lessons that can be applied in other settings.

*“Partnership areas continue to broaden the ‘toolkit of conservation’ which NPS can offer the nation.”*

Steve Elkinton, Program Leader, National Trails System  
Programming, Washington, D.C.

*“Through the newly authorized partnership parks, we have learned how to manage collaboratively. This has in turn benefited the more traditional parks, which often face many of the same issues.”*

Sarah Peskin, Planning and Legislation Group Manager,  
Boston Support Office

The diverse working relationships that result from managing the partnership areas introduce fresh perspectives and new interpretation and conservation techniques, which can be applied in other circumstances by both the NPS and its partners. In addition, as pointed

out by Phil Huffman and others, the accumulating body of experience in planning and managing partnership areas is directly relevant to challenging situations that confront the agency in the more traditional units.

### Partnership areas foster a stewardship ethic among the general public.

*Partnership areas contribute to a “broader dissemination of the natural and cultural resource preservation ethic because more people will end up living closer to nationally treasured resources. ... [They] enable more people to have an emotional connection to the National Park System.”*

Tom Gilbert, Superintendent,  
Ice Age and North Country National Scenic Trails

*“People are raising their field of vision beyond the often fragmented preservation of individual areas, structures and critical habitats to focus on how the benefits of parks and responsible stewardship can be integrated into the connecting fabric of people’s everyday lives.”*

Rolf Diamant, Superintendent,  
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park



### *The Mission of the National Park Service*

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National

Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

– From *NPS Strategic Plan, 2001-2005*

Areas that are jointly planned and managed by NPS and partner organizations offer many opportunities for conveying a stewardship message. Partnership areas such as the national heritage areas affirm that the places where we live and work contain cultural, scenic, and recreational resources worthy of protection. They contribute a broader context and relevance to the story of the nation’s natural and cultural history, and they enhance the ability to convey those messages in ways that may affect conservation on a broader scale.

## C. The Challenges of Change

Over the past two decades, the NPS clearly has begun to emphasize protection and management of conservation areas through long-term collaborations. In this time of transition, there are a number of challenges to the agency, including to:

- Create a broader vision for the NPS that encompasses the full scope of partnerships;
- Foster in the institutional culture of the NPS a new and deeper understanding of partnerships as a potent catalyst for stewardship of the landscape;
- Provide training in leadership skills that positions the NPS to be most effective in its collaborations; and
- Learn from experience.

In general, participants expressed an urgent need to raise awareness of the many contributions of partnership areas to the NPS as a whole, in order to create better support agency-wide for these areas and for partnership programs. In a more practical sense, even though the trends show more cooperative designations and increased requests for technical assistance, agency policy and procedures often do not reflect what is needed to be effective in collaborative work. “Traditional organizational structures are not well suited to the demands of managing partnerships,” states John Debo, and “the background and training of NPS personnel are often not adequate for the challenges associated with partnership areas.” Joe DiBello adds, “None of our existing programs addresses planning in terms of partnerships in any comprehensive way. We need to develop new policies or direction in how we conduct and organize our planning programs.” Barbara Pollarine stresses the importance of building agency staff capacity “in the areas of coalition and relationship building, fundraising and development activities, and collaborative agenda setting.”

As the agency moves increasingly from a paradigm of management to one of stewardship, there is an accompanying challenge to create a broader vision that encompasses the concept of partnerships, and to realign policies and procedures to support this shift in approach.

## D. A Vision for the Future

As the workshop discussions proceeded, the need to articulate a vision for the future became clear. Participants foresee a future in which units of the National Park System and the partnership areas outside the System are all part of a nationwide network of parks and conservation areas that are relevant to a diverse population. This network includes resources protected through traditional public ownership, areas protected through the efforts of private organizations such as land trusts, and the resources conserved through collaborative strategies. This future includes a strong, innovative private sector working with a variety of audiences. Nonprofit organizations, institutions, academia, businesses, and public sector agencies all play important roles.

National Park Service involvement in this network of collaboration is central and crucial, founded in the agency’s traditional strengths and roles but extending beyond its identity as park manager in the following ways:

- NPS manages resources as national parks through a spectrum of partnerships ranging from new parks that are operated jointly with other entities from the onset, to the ever-expanding partnership strategies that address conservation issues surrounding more traditional parks. In all instances, the NPS brings its fullest range of tools to the partnership work table, whether it be the ability to provide planning assistance for a collaborative effort or to help interpret a story that plays out beyond a traditional park boundary.
- NPS invests in the conservation and interpretation of areas of special importance to the nation’s natural or cultural history through long-term conservation partnerships focused on specific areas, such as designated national heritage areas. In these instances, often the expertise requested of the NPS and the rationale for NPS commitment are the same: helping to tell a nationally important story and conserve significant resources.
- NPS supports local efforts to develop conservation areas through long-established technical and financial assistance programs (e.g., Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance and National Register of Historic Places).

In this future, NPS programs that support conservation efforts within partnership areas are recognized and accepted as valuable and integral to the agency's mission, and there is widespread understanding of the skills and commitment that build and sustain long-term collaboration. The sense of competition that many participants feel today between parks and partnership areas is replaced with an appreciation for the contributions of each to conservation of the American landscape.



*The Appalachian National Scenic Trail at Black Rock, Shenandoah National Park, in Virginia. Vistas along the footpath, which follows the ridgelines of the Appalachian Mountains between Maine and Georgia, range from pastoral to wild. Two-thirds of the U.S. population lives within 550 miles of the trail. Photo by Mike Warren, courtesy of Appalachian Trail Conference.*

*"It would seem time to articulate, demonstrate and broadly accept a vision of the [National Park Service] role in the American landscape. ... By embracing involvement in these parts of the landscape, we create a broader context and relevance for the story of the nation's natural and cultural history. Moreover, we greatly enhance our ability to convey those messages in ways that may affect conservation on a broader scale."*

Jonathan Doherty, Manager,  
Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network

1. *Spring Plowing Match at Billings Farm & Museum in Woodstock, Vermont. The museum is a working dairy farm and a museum of agricultural and rural life operated by the Woodstock Foundation. The museum works in partnership with Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park to continue a shared legacy of land stewardship. Photo by Jon Gilbert Fox, courtesy of Billings Farm & Museum.*



2. *A scene along the seven-mile corridor of the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area in Georgia. The canal transformed Augusta into an important regional industrial area on the eve of the Civil War, and played a key role in the post-Civil War relocation of much of the nation's textile industry to the south. Photo by Judy Hart.*



3. *Informational materials on the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The NPS makes a key contribution to many partnerships by providing skilled interpretive and technical assistance, important here to the Corridor's tourism and regional educational efforts. Photo courtesy of Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.*

4. *The Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, established in 1996. The 54-mile trail commemorates the 1965 voting rights march led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., along U.S. Highway 80 from Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church in Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery. The march helped inspire passage of the voting rights legislation signed into law by President Johnson in August 1965. Photos by Barbara Tagger.*



5. *Waterman on the Chesapeake Bay. Traditional livelihoods and ways of living, which are based on the Bay's unique natural resources, are integral to the region's stories and culture. The fate of these livelihoods, at risk due to degradation and overuse of resources, rests on conservation and restoration efforts. Restoration in turn depends upon education that fosters understanding, which is at the heart of the mission of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. Photo courtesy of Virginia Tourism Corporation.*



6. *A ranger-led tour of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock, Vermont, overlooking the fields of the Billings Farm. Photo courtesy of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.*

7. *Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore along Lake Superior in Michigan. The North Country Trail crosses the top of these multicolored sandstone cliffs. Photo by Tom Gilbert.*



## IV. Steps to Enhance and Sustain National Park Service Partnerships

The workshop discussions generated many ideas for addressing the challenges of building long-term partnerships and creating effective National Park Service (NPS) collaborations. This section summarizes these ideas, but does not offer detailed prescriptions for implementation. Much of what follows is directed at enhancing the effectiveness of the NPS as a partner. Through additional dialogue within the agency and with collaborating organizations, the NPS and its partners can further develop specific actions for more effective partnerships to conserve the important cultural and natural heritage of the United States.

🌀 **Create additional opportunities to learn from partnership experiences, involving both NPS staff and partner representatives.** To be a learning organization, the NPS must develop opportunities for evaluation and feedback from both agency staff and partners. Since NPS partnerships are evolving rapidly, it is essential to continually evaluate the partnership models and hone the necessary expertise and collaborative leadership skills that lead to success over the long term. Incorporating this understanding of what it takes to achieve successful collaborations will enable both NPS staff and partners to strengthen local partnerships. Gathering the stories of successful partnerships can enhance understanding of collaborative work, and can build support for partnerships within the NPS and with important constituencies. In addition, participants specifically noted that the vocabulary for the diversity of partnership arrangements has not kept up with the evolution of practice. Participants suggested the following ideas for creating additional learning opportunities:

- Organize, perhaps on an annual basis, additional workshops such as the workshop upon which this report is based, in order to share lessons and to collectively reflect on future directions for this type of conservation. Future workshops should expand the participation of partners from other regions of the country, paying particular attention to groups who represent diverse populations or urban constituencies.
- Capitalize on the extensive experience of the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program in planning ongoing partnership training opportunities.



#### IV. STEPS TO ENHANCE AND SUSTAIN NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS

- Compile a series of case studies on partnerships and partnership areas. Such a compilation of best practices could be distributed to professionals involved in similar work within and outside the NPS and could also be presented in various training programs. Case studies could include such information as the legislative framework, innovations, and reflections on the successes and failures from a variety of perspectives.
- Expand training opportunities for NPS employees, partners, and other conservation professionals that specifically focus on making partnerships work. Professional development in such areas as collaborative leadership, facilitation, and conflict management was suggested.
- Create a mentorship program and a means for identifying individuals with the potential to be especially successful in partner relationships.
- Simplify the language used to describe partnerships and collaborative work to encourage greater understanding of the benefits both within and outside the NPS. More thought should be given to terms that are accessible to diverse audiences.
- Seek terminology which conveys parity to partnership areas and traditional national parks and furthers the concept of a nationwide network of parks and conservation areas. Clarify agency nomenclature to reduce the confusion within existing descriptions of national parks and other conservation areas (see page 5, “Current Definitions from the Index of the National Park Service,” which was taken from recent NPS literature).

🌀 **Develop means for recognizing the successes and contributions of partnership areas and programs, and for rewarding the individuals who make them work.** Workshop participants believe it essential to increase understanding and build additional support within the agency for partnership areas. They suggested highlighting success stories and the people involved; emphasizing the benefits of partnership areas to staff throughout the agency; and in particular cultivating support within the NPS leadership for partnership initiatives, new types of park areas, and partnership programs. More widespread understanding of the role partnerships can play in conserving the American landscape would enable the NPS to be a more effective partner and leader. Ways to give a higher profile to partnership areas and the individuals who make them work could include:

- Provide information on the home page of the NPS website, such as listing the different partnership area categories outside of the National Park System, the criteria for eligibility, information on local responsibilities, and the opportunities for financial, technical, and planning assistance.
- Include information on partnership areas and programs in all NPS internal bulletin boards and publications.
- Provide information and explain the benefits of partnership programs and areas in NPS materials for the general public.
- Recognize annually those individuals within the agency and partner organizations who have made outstanding contributions in advancing partnerships.

🌀 **Provide new tools and more flexibility in NPS planning and management of partnerships and partnership areas.** Workshop participants would like to see availability of new tools and additional flexibility within the existing NPS planning programs to better facilitate collaborative planning and management and to meet the different needs of partnership areas. In addition, participants commented on the importance of more effectively engaging partners and local communities in planning and management activities, and often referred to “buy-in” or “empowerment” of a wide diversity of people. They stressed the need to use an open process that transcends traditional public involvement. Participants also suggested a phased approach to designating new partnership areas that would strengthen relationships with key partners prior to designation. Some of the suggestions that follow may require some restructuring of the NPS budget formulation and allocation process to provide greater flexibility and support for partnership areas and programs.

- Add a technical assistance component to existing planning programs that addresses collaborative planning projects.
- Build a capacity for “hot-spot” planning and assistance to provide for quick response and innovation.
- Consider amending the traditional NPS “one-size-fits-all” planning framework to better accommodate areas that require a longer planning time frame, technical assistance, and an investment strategy.



- Open up the traditional public involvement process of planning and management to encourage ongoing local engagement and to build participation by diverse audiences.
- In designating new partnership areas, consider using the early stages of public involvement to build lasting relationships with potential partners. One possible model used successfully by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program to study and designate several mostly privately owned river corridors has the following four phases:
  - Determine eligibility with full public involvement;
  - If determined eligible, conduct management planning with local communities and other key stakeholders and, if applicable, identify a management entity;
  - Undertake demonstration projects to assess long-term feasibility;
  - Determine whether to seek authorization/ designation and in what form.

NPS staff and partners frequently do not have a common understanding of the implications of federal designation, and as a result have different expectations for NPS and partner roles. Therefore, consider the following:

- Clarify the application of NPS guidelines for all new partnership areas, including national heritage areas and affiliated areas;
- Define the appropriate application of NPS standards (for example, NPS maintenance and accessibility standards) to nonfederal lands in a partnership area; and
- Provide more specific guidance on the full universe of federal technical and financial assistance that may be available to partnership areas.

#### **Revise management approaches to staff transition in partnership areas to retain institutional memory and ensure continuity of partner relationships.**

Throughout the NPS and in partner organizations, managers are spending more and more time and energy on cultivating partnerships of all kinds. Since successful collaborations rely on building relationships, longer staff tenures are critical. Inevitably, however, key personnel do move on, and the NPS and its partners must facilitate as smooth a management transition as possible. Recognizing those people who have played key roles in the partnership can be an important part of the transition.

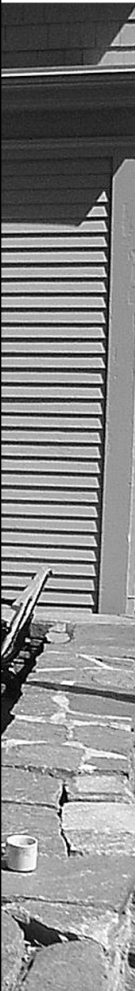
- Find ways during transition of key partnership staff to capture critical institutional memory, and work to maintain momentum, continuity, and personal communication between the NPS and partner organizations.
- Recognize and appropriately honor the contributions of individuals who have built and sustained these relationships over time.

#### **Develop clearer direction on the appropriate application of NPS management policies and other federal guidelines and requirements in partnership areas.** Workshop participants identified the lack of clarity on the application of existing NPS guidelines as a hindrance to effectiveness in partnership areas. This ambiguity surrounding guidelines means that

Photos courtesy of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park



## V. Concluding Remarks



This report has endeavored to describe the evolving nature of partnerships between the National Park Service (NPS) and other organizations that extend both the agency and its partners beyond traditional forms of management. Whether new national parks or other Congressionally designated areas administered jointly with a diverse array of partners, these collaborations enable the NPS and its partners to reach new constituencies, commemorate previously overlooked stories, and extend the agency's stewardship practice and message in new ways. These partnerships, designed for the long term, broaden the agency's leadership potential and bring benefits to the entire National Park System, including the more traditional national parks.

Across the United States today, people are working together in community-based conservation initiatives that integrate natural and cultural heritage. The NPS, with its combination of flagship national parks, expertise in interpretation and story-telling, and expanding array of successful partnerships, is uniquely positioned to contribute to conservation practice into the future. As workshop participants observed, it is imperative that the NPS capitalize on the considerable experience both within the agency and with its partners in order to fulfill this potential.

Workshop participants have envisioned a future in which the NPS is a leader—managing national parks in partnership, facilitating resource management through collaborations with diverse organizations and institutions, and assisting local efforts to preserve the important stories that together make up the heritage of all Americans. This report places this vision before a broader audience. By engaging others in this discussion, including all levels of the agency and partner organizations, the NPS and its partners can move to a new, more collaborative paradigm of stewardship.

1. *The workshop participants outside of the historic carriage barn that houses the offices of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.*
2. *Workshop participants Sarah Peskin, Jonathan Doherty, partner David Donath, Steve Elkinton, and partner David Startzell, left to right.*
3. *Partner Augie Carlino, left, and Barbara Tagger, right.*
4. *John Debo, Barbara Pollarine, workshop facilitator Sharon Behar, partner Jessica Brown, Bob McIntosh, and Chuck Barscz, left to right.*
5. *Joe DiBello, Bob McIntosh, Warren Brown, and Jonathan Doherty, left to right.*



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Lessons Learned in Areas  
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